



WaterLog

Solid Waste Management Coming Soon to the Bootheel of Missouri

Small communities in the Bootheel of Missouri, a farming area with predominantly low income households, are joining the national trend towards solid waste recycling. A \$101,000 solid waste management grant from USDA Rural Development is making that possible.

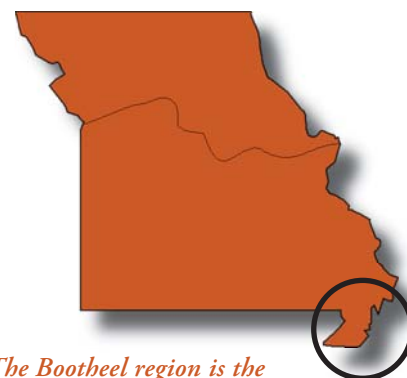
Rural Development has approved funding an expansion of recycling in

the Bootheel counties of Dunklin, New Madrid, and Pemiscot. Outside of the area's larger cities of Kennett, Caruthersville and Malden, resources to establish recycling services have been scarce.

"There are small communities and rural areas of the Bootheel which haven't had this option until now," said MAP Rural

Development Specialist David Dirks. "Some recycling infrastructure is in place and we plan to add these communities to the current system."

The average Missouri resident discards about 1,400 pounds of trash each year.



The Bootheel region is the southward extension of Missouri in the southeastern corner of the state.

Watch Your Mail for a Pizza Box!

Watch your mail! A pizza box is on the way. But don't worry about it fitting your mailbox, or any mess from cheese or sauce. This box is only about a six inch square, and its round content is a CD, not a pie, that should help you keep your water safe and clean.

In cooperation with the Rural Community Assistance Partnership, of which MAP is one of six members covering every state in the nation, the Safe

Drinking Water Trust has prepared this "mini pizza box" mailing. It contains a "Security and Emergency Response Planning Toolbox for Small Water and Wastewater Systems" on a computer CD. It also includes information for subscribing to the free Water Trust "eBulletin."

But you don't even have to wait for the pizza box to do the signup for the eBulletin. You can go to the www.watertrust.org website today and click on the free signup link.

The eBulletin provides internet access to useful information to help you provide safe water for your community, and make informed decisions that benefit you and you neighbors.

The eBulletin will help you keep your system in compliance with EPA regulations, and maintain your water quality in the most proactive way. A new edition is emailed to subscribers every three weeks.

Estimates suggest about 40 percent of that is potentially recyclable newspaper, cardboard, metal cans, and plastic milk and beverage bottles.

Based on experience elsewhere, it's expected that about 30 percent of households will recycle once the system is up and running. This will divert almost 1,200 tons of material into the recycling stream annually.

This program will provide 14 Bootheel communities with recycling drop-off sites and education. Targeted communities

continues on 3



Image created by Larry Etkin

Look for this box in your mail. (Not to scale and sorry, pizza cutter not included.)

Visit our Web Site! <http://www.map-inc.org>

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New Rural Development Specialist Hired for Missouri...

David Dirks is the most recent addition to MAP's staff, as a Rural Development Specialist based in Bernie, Mo., which is in Stoddard County in the southeast corner of the state. Before joining MAP he worked almost 11 years for the Bootheel Regional Planning Commission in Malden, Mo., as a solid waste and transportation planner, and Community

Development Block Grant building inspector. He has also been a building inspector and code enforcement officer for the City of Malden, and has experience in farming, electrical and plumbing supply sales, and banking. He has been married for 26 years and has two grown sons.

...Search for Another, for Wyoming, is Underway...

MAP has also recently initiated a search for another new Rural Development Specialist, this position to be based in Wyoming. The new position will supplement the efforts of MAP staff currently based in Casper and Green River. The new person will assist rural Wyoming communities to develop and improve their water and wastewater facilities, and their planning and management practices. Applicants must possess public drinking

water utility management and operational experience, community development skills, knowledge of governmental funding sources and group facilitation skills. Individuals interested in applying for the position should visit the MAP website to see a more detailed job description and to access the electronic job application.

...and MAP's Search for a CEO Continues

MAP board president John Woodwick says the board's search committee, having conducted a national recruitment campaign for a new Chief Executive Officer, is in the process of screening applicants. He says the board is anticipating that chief executive officer candidate's final interviews will be held at the board's

next meeting, scheduled for mid-June, 2006. Joyce Anderson and Russ Serbus have been serving as an interim leadership team since February. Anderson is MAP's director of administration. Russ is the director of finance.

Employee Search Assistance for Region's Communities

In response to an inquiry from a Montana community, MAP is initiating some modest advertising assistance for communities in our service region seeking professional water, sewer and waste system management or operational staff from beyond their immediate areas.

To the degree that space and timeliness permits, *WaterLog* will provide free list-

ing of personnel ads of this nature. MAP will also provide space on its website "employment" pages for these listings.

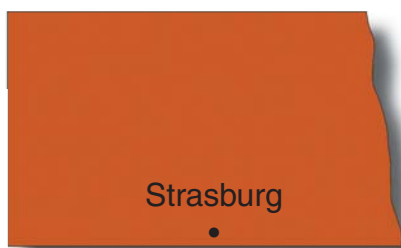
If this service would be useful to your community, you can contact MAP communications manager Larry Etkin (lomap@bevcomm.net) for details. You can also pass the information along to

him through MAP staff in your state. Be sure that your listing includes information on who a potential applicant should contact in your community for additional information, and any application deadlines.

Arsenic Rule Compliance Not Appreciated by All in North Dakota

The downside of a major drinking water upgrade is on display in Strasburg, N.D. It's the reality that such improvements are often accompanied by relatively large rate increases, even when significant financial assistance is available. In Strasburg, population 549, of which 12 percent have incomes below the poverty line, monthly water rates nearly doubled in October 2005 to pay for their improvements.

Water rates are also expected to double again before the situation settles into a



new status quo of about \$45 a month per account for up to about 4,000 gallons of treated water. The old price of \$12 for 2,000 gallons a month was not even covering the system's costs at that time.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, for water to be considered affordable, a residential connection should not pay more than 2 percent of the city's Household Median Income, which for Strasburg is about \$25,000. EPA's 2 percent standard for Strasburg, about \$42 a month, is pretty close to what its residents will eventually pay.

With regulations ratcheting down permissible levels of contaminants, North Dakota's Department of Health contracted with MAP to evaluate water supply arsenic concentrations in 14 rural communities. This was done to comply with a new "Arsenic Rule" that went into effect last January.

Strasburg is one of about 20 North Dakota communities whose water has

been found to have arsenic above the new maximum contaminant level of 10 parts per billion. The old standard had allowed a much higher 50 ppb.

The best solution identified for Strasburg is actually only an interim fix. A regional water district established to serve a large part of south central North Dakota is still seeking funding for development. Instead of being able to just connect the city to that larger rural water system, South Central Water District presented Strasburg with a plan to install and operate a small packaged filtration plant to treat groundwater for iron and arsenic removal.

Strasburg has signed a 40-year lease agreement with the water district that includes providing a certified operator for the treatment facility. Strasburg is receiving a Community Development Block Grant that will partly cover construction of a building to house the water treatment equipment.

Construction is scheduled for this summer. The filtration system should be

turned on and in operation by October 2006. The city will own the building, an asset they can convert to another use when the regional water supply becomes available.

Residents of the community have voiced their displeasure about the rate increase. They say the new arsenic rule unnecessarily forced the city into a long-term agreement that effectively ties them into the rural water district forever. Other residents know they have to bring their system into compliance with the Arsenic Rule.

Similar expressions of displeasure are not uncommon in communities accustomed to artificially low water and sewer costs. Rates often rise dramatically when current dollars are spent to upgrade old or construct new water and wastewater systems to achieve compliance with state or federal regulations.

Bootheel Solid Waste Management

from page 1

are Clarkton, Holcomb and Senath in Dunklin County, Gideon, Howardville, Lilbourn, Marston, Morehouse, Risco and Parma in New Madrid County, and Hayti, Hayti Heights, Homestown and Wardell in Pemiscot County. More than 13,000 people will be served in these communities.

Dunklin County Commissioner and Bootheel Solid Waste Management District Executive Board Member Jeanne Herbst is very happy about the grant. "This is good news for the Bootheel," she said. "We appreciate the Midwest Assistance Program and especially MAP's Dennis Siders and David Dirks for their efforts in bringing recycling to the small communities in our region."

To implement the program, MAP will provide a solid waste management professional to set up and direct the project. There will be extensive informational and educational activities conducted through area schools and community groups to present details about the project and encourage support and participation.

By the end of the year-long project, drop-off trailers will be in place, along with procedures for rotating them among the communities and to the processing centers. Training will also be conducted with volunteers to help keep the program going, and grants for continuing operations will be sought.

Community Development Needs “Common Sense” Strategies

It’s amazing how people in rural communities express their desire to be independent and self-supporting, yet elected leaders often say “we can’t.” And, while people across rural America elect state and national leaders who preach a positive message, in many rural communities everything stays pretty much the same or even deteriorates. What’s the problem?

Elected leaders and others make motivational speeches about building “sustainable” communities, but really don’t have a true understanding about what actually makes a rural community sustainable.

If local leaders don’t know “how to” implement a sustainable community, and if state and national leaders just “talk” about it, nothing gets done. Community leaders need “how to” information so sustainability can actually be implemented.

If anything is going to happen, a community “spark plug” has to get them started. Then, if adequate “how to” knowledge is brought to the table, a viable program to build a sustainable community can actually be implemented. Once a long-term plan is implemented,

very positive attitude changes often can be observed throughout the community.

Local leaders willing to learn a “formula” approach to planning and budgeting for a community service and future infrastructure needs, often find the same “formula” useful city-wide for planning and operating their city like a business.

An example: more than a decade ago, some engineers and technical assistance providers implemented “how to” strategies of lower cost alternative technologies and management techniques so wastewater service could be afforded to more rural communities. EPA named these strategies “Centralized Management of Decentralized Facilities.” They have since become standard operating procedure for many communities.

The strategies involved little beyond common sense. “Regionalization” did not have to include physically connecting rural communities together with pipeline and common facilities.

The same benefits could be attained if communities cooperated to

consolidate purchasing to gain quantity discounts; shared equipment not needed full-time; and jointly hired a licensed operator to manage a group of community facilities to improve service quality.

Giving “common sense” strategies national name recognition started a flow of important strategies to states, communities and industry consultants.

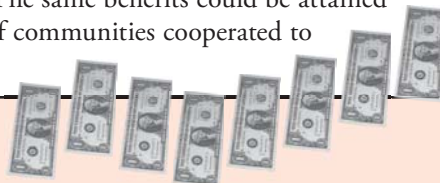
Creating sustainable rural communities is benefiting from a similar process. EPA has assigned the name “Asset Management” to successful common sense strategies of planning for replacing vehicles, equipment, facilities and buildings that deteriorate from use and over time, by setting aside a few dollars each month. With a national name, advocates hope to disseminate these “standard operating procedures” even more widely.

Knowing there are proven strategies, rural community leaders will be more likely to implement them in their communities. They will improve their ability to meet tougher financial reporting requirements. They will improve their ability to manage facilities and provide high quality services in rural communities at substantially reduced cost over the long term. This kind of “nuts and bolts” information tells a small community’s leaders “how to” build a “sustainable” rural community.

MAP field staff meets the people of rural America and shares with them ideas that broaden knowledge of how to improve quality of life in their rural communities. Such knowledge is often nothing more than “common sense” solutions rural residents can be proud to implement.

Applying these types of solutions to meet existing and long-term infrastructure needs, show community leaders that basic strategies can positively affect rural community development and sustainability over the long haul.

*By Len Coffelt
MAP Rural Development Specialist*



A Common Sense Guide

A balanced “formula” for guiding community planning and budgeting is simple. It need only account for the basic idea that a city’s income has to cover its current and future expenses.

COLLECTED REVENUE MUST EQUAL:

ALL Operation and Maintenance Expenses [Less than 50% of revenue is ideal.]

PLUS Debt Service [All debt payments and contributions to debt reserve should not exceed 25% of revenue. Exceeding this should only be temporary.]

PLUS Operating Reserve [Accumulate one month’s operation and maintenance Expenses.]

PLUS Emergency Reserve [Accumulate 6–12 month’s operation and maintenance Expenses.]

PLUS Depreciation Reserve [For system and equipment replacement, 15–25% of revenue is typically needed to fully fund life cycle needs of this reserve.]

Once adequate funds are collected into a particular reserve, no additional deposits need to be made into that reserve fund. If your community cannot afford to fully fund all of these needed reserve accounts, start doing something because over the long term, it is going to cost less if small contributions are made every year than it will cost if you have a major system failure and you have made no financial preparations.

Influencing Outcomes: Steps to a Successful Project

Success with a major infrastructure improvement requires many things coming together smoothly. With construction weather here, it's important that local boards and councils take ownership of their projects, not relinquish oversight to an outside project engineer or attorney.

The secrets to successful oversight are understanding what is happening, being engaged with the project, constructing a good contract bid document, and systematically selecting participants such as the general contractor and project inspectors.

It's especially important to maintain a professional relationship with your project engineer. Even if he or she is a friend, in a business relationship you must always have the perspective that, first and foremost, the engineer is working for you. A board must demand to be involved in the development of engineering plans, clearly communicate the goals you want your system to meet, and discuss what your personnel can manage, operate and maintain. The engineer should present options for consideration and plans for review and acceptance.

Final plans and specifications are the basis for contract bids and documents. No business wants to sign an incomplete contract. Prior to soliciting for bids from contractors, hold a pre-bid conference.

An incomplete final design plan can result in imprecise bids from contractors. Items that have to be put in after construction starts are a cost the owner bears. Inaccurate or missing information can be a source for disputes.

At a pre-bid conference, contractors interested in bidding are invited to ask the engineer or owner questions. Contractors can often suggest improvements, but if any are adopted, an addendum to the plans must be sent to all of the contractors interested in bidding.

The detailed bid and specification document is your contract for the construction project. It details the division of responsibilities between you, the engineer, general contractor, and resident

inspector. It details how change orders, pay requests, warranties, etc., are done. It should be developed using the construction industry's government owned projects "standard general conditions

A Good Team

Consider developing a project construction management team. A good team for a small project would include:

- ✓ *Owners Representative – Board/Council Member*
- ✓ *Technical Advisor [engineer and/or MAP advisor]*
- ✓ *Construction Manager [the engineer]*
- ✓ *Financial Management and Administration [staff]*
- ✓ *Parts and Material Verification [system operator]*
- ✓ *Resident Inspector [engineering staff or contracted consultant]*
- ✓ *General Contractor [represents subcontractors]*
- ✓ *Legal Advisor – Project Attorney*

of construction contract." The contract specifies how things are to be built, and what materials, parts and equipment must be used. Some government agencies may require additional attachments.

Scheduling begins during the design process. Specifications should require a project start date, include a substantial completion date for having things up and running, and a "final completion date" at which everything, including paperwork, is finished.

Use a procurement process to select your contractor and prudently qualify the general contractor and subcontractors. Be careful to comply with legal requirements and know if anything special is required by a funding agency. Make sure all proposed contractors have sufficient experience to do the job.

Competitive bidding generally gets you the best job for the money spent. Make sure to check references from the all bidders, not just the apparent low bidder.

Sometimes, the low bidder is not the best contractor for the job, though many states require choosing the low bid. Even if you are permitted to award the contract based on the most "qualified" contractor that has submitted a bid, you must **always** have a good **documented** reason for not taking the low bid.

Most contractors use subcontractors. Find out who these are going to be and check their references as well. You may want to deny a contract award based on this information.

Protect yourself! Have adequate liability insurance. Have job descriptions and construction safety training for all personnel. Have surety bonds for everyone handling finances.

The engineer should have an adequate errors and omission policy. Make sure the contractor puts up a bid bond, has their own adequate liability insurance and has an adequate performance bond.

Other cautions? Don't let the engineer overstep bounds; demand the resident inspector be at the job site; when disputes arise, look at the contract bid document. Also pay attention to project alterations: change orders need to be presented and approved before being implemented.

Finally, it's critical to not wait to report problems with the contractor to the performance bond company, but always confer with your attorney first. Why? Failure to put the contractor's bonding company on notice and exercise schedule enforcement, default and remedies exactly as stated in the construction bid document may result in loss of avenues for legal recourse.

*By Phillip Fishburn
MAP Rural Development Specialist*

Multiple Problems, Lack of Funds, Plagued South Dakota Community

With both wastewater and clean water system problems, the City of Geddes, S.D., population 252, clearly had a dilemma. Plugged wastewater lines, collapsing brick manholes, and significant leaks and loss from its drinking water system all vied for the city's attention. Its scarce financial resources were clearly not adequate for the scale of their problems.

Geddes experienced plugged wastewater lines during winter 2003-04. To solve what they thought was a simple problem, the town hired a contractor to clear out the system. The result was other than expected: along with the usual accumulation of debris in the lines, a significant number of bricks were recovered. With existing visual evidence in some locations, this finding sealed the conclusion that manholes were caving in across the almost century-old system.

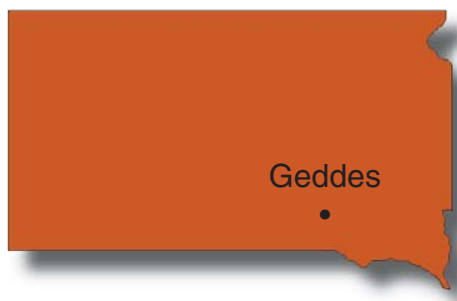
MAP staff was asked in the spring of 2004, to help the community find funds to replace the manholes. MAP staff suggested that a comprehensive study of the entire system would be appropriate before investing funds into the visible repair needs. With a system that old, there would undoubtedly also be other problems.

A comprehensive study required a registered professional engineer, and MAP staff was able to guide the city council to funds available for that purpose from the small community planning grant program of the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources. MAP staff explained the engineering procurement procedure that would enable the city to use federal funding available through the state to help pay for professional engineering services.

With MAP staff assistance, a professional engineering firm was selected, an application for the community planning grant prepared, and funds were awarded. MAP staff also contacted the South Central Water Development District, as

that regional unit of government had been able to assist other small communities in the area with financial assistance for planning and study funds for water related projects. This application was also successfully prepared, submitted and approved, for a comprehensive study of the community's wastewater collection system.

The study determined that correcting all existing problems would probably



cost about \$950,900. This was more than double the state constitutional limit on the amount of funds the city could borrow for water and wastewater improvements. In fact, this great disparity led to an investigation by the Minneapolis Federal Reserve District, which used it as an example of funding problems faced by small communities.

This problem, coming on top of a known need to repair the city water system, meant existing funds couldn't be dedicated to either problem. It made the city reluctant even to commit 100 percent of its insufficient bonding capacity to the wastewater project.

MAP staff suggested a pre-application be submitted to USDA Rural Development, and that the South Dakota small cities Community Development Block Grant program might be able to supplement any USDARD grant or loan. The CDBG program requires that at least half a project's beneficiaries meet low to moderate income guidelines for the area. Unfortunately, 2000 census data indicated this requirement was not met. However,

with census data more than five years old, and the area's agriculture economy suffering from drought for several years, an income survey was deemed appropriate to obtain current information.

The state CDBG office provided the information needed to complete a survey acceptable to the region's HUD office. MAP staff prepared survey forms and trained the council on how to conduct the income survey properly. MAP staff compiled the information collected by the council, and was able to show that the community did meet low/moderate income requirements for the CDBG program.

The area Planning and Development District has staff proficient in working with the CDBG program. A joint MAP CDBG effort was mounted to complete the necessary applications for funding. MAP will work on the USDA RD application and Dist III staff will work on the CDBG application. All documentation will be completed and the applications submitted to agencies by June 1, 2006.

*By Jay Larson
MAP Rural Development Specialist*

Southern Iowa Sewage

from back page

very small towns have little chance of receiving Community Development Block Grant Funds on their own.

When the studies are complete, participating communities may be able to use them in support of CDBG applications, and to develop preliminary schedules for implement improvement projects to be operated by SIRWA.

All 11 unsewered cities in the service area, one with as few as a dozen residents, have voted to join in the study.

*By Randy Finholt
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Proactive Sewage Program to Start in Southern Iowa

It has often taken small communities months to react to plan of action requests which may have had deadlines of only weeks. Having a plan ready to go promises to make the process more efficient and much less painful. That's the premise behind a proactive approach in Iowa.

In September 2004, the Southern Iowa Rural Water Association approached Midwest Assistance Program and USDA Rural Development proposing a sewer framework study for all unsewered incorporated communities within their area. The idea came from the frustrations of communities attempting to comply with Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Notice of Violation. An NOV typically requires completion of a plan of action by an engineer.

SIRWA's staff engineer told MAP a proactive study would better position everyone in their area to deal with problems. MAP and RD both offered to participate, and as a more concrete proposal was developed, IDNR and the Iowa

Department of Economic Development were invited to join.

Under the proposal, SIRWA will pay for the study. Their only requirement is that towns commit to holding a franchise election. A vote against a SIRWA wastewater franchise agreement will leave a community on its own.

The study will incorporate a new IDNR priority system. The old system of setting environmental priorities is under review because, based on complaints and testing, it misses many important issues.

A SIRWA priority matrix will incorporate a city's interest in a project, how many people it would serve, size of project, types of collection and treatment systems planned, existing NOV's, and impacts on downstream areas it would protect.

Priority values will be set with input by county sanitarians and board members, who are believed to have a significantly greater detailed knowledge of their locales, and individual criteria for setting priorities. Valuing priorities will be one of the most significant early issues.

The initial study proposal is limited to incorporated communities, which are legally permitted to approve agreements allowing system ownership by SIRWA. Some stakeholders are proposing to expand the study to unincorporated towns, and to use of intergovernmental instead of franchise agreements.

USDA Rural Development would also like to require a meaningful evaluation of onsite wastewater systems for towns with fewer than 50 households, where lagoons would be far too expensive to keep rate reasonable.

A major issue is information gathering. Sources will include aerial photo maps, U.S. Geological Survey Contours, Soil Conservation Service soils information, and visits to habitable structures to see if businesses are present that would impact system design.

MAP and SIRWA staff plan meetings with city councils to discuss treatment issues, options, costs, and perceptions about cost effective solutions. Regional and multi-city solutions will be considered to expand funding options, since

continues on 6

Inside This Issue

- *Solid Waste Management Coming to the Bootheel of Missouri*
- *Arsenic Rule Compliance Not Appreciated by All in North Dakota*
- *Community Development Needs "Common Sense" Strategies*
- *Influencing Outcomes: Steps to a Successful Project*
- *Multiple Problems, Lack of Funds, Plagued South Dakota Community*